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THE SUPERSTITION OF DIVORCE

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IRISH IMPRESSIONS

HERETICS

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THE CRIMES OF ENGLAND

A SHORT HISTORY OF ENGLAND

ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

MAN ALIVE

THE FLYING INN

THE BALL AND THE CROSS

THE INNOCENCE OF FATHER BROWN

THE WISDOM OF FATHER BROWN

THE NAPOLEON OF NOTTING HILL

POEMS

THE BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

THE SUPERSTITION OF DIVORCE

BY

G. K. CHESTERTON

AUTHOR OF
"HERETICS," "ORTHODOXY," "IRISH IMPRESSIONS," ETC.

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Introductory Note

THE earlier part of this book appeared in the form of five articles which came out in the "New Witness" at the crisis of the recent controversy in the Press on the subject of divorce. Crude and sketchy as they confessedly were, they had a certain rude plan of their own, which I find it very difficult to recast even in order to expand. I have therefore decided to reprint the original articles as they stood, save for a few introductory words; and then, at the risk of repetition, to add a few further chapters, explaining more fully any conceptions that may seem to have been too crudely assumed or dismissed. I have set forth the original matter as it appeared, under a general heading, without dividing it into chapters.

G. K. C.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Superstition of Divorce	11
The Story of the Family	61
The Story of the Vow	83
The Tragedies of Marriage	105
The Vista of Divorce	127
Conclusion	147

THE SUPERSTITION OF DIVORCE

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I.—The Superstition of Divorce

IT is futile to talk of reform with reference to form. To take a case from my own taste and fancy, there is nothing I feel to be so beautiful and wonderful as a window. All casements are magic casements, whether they open on the foam or the front-garden; they lie close to the ultimate mystery and paradox of limitation and liberty. But if I followed my instinct towards an infinite number of windows, it would end in having no walls. It would also (it may be added incidentally) end in having no windows either; for a window makes a picture by making a picture-frame. But there is a simpler way of stating my more simple and fatal error. It is that I have wanted a window, without considering whether I wanted a house. Now many appeals are being made to us to-day on behalf of that light and liberty that might

well be symbolised by windows; especially as so many of them concern the enlightenment and liberation of the house, in the sense of the home. Many quite disinterested people urge many quite reasonable considerations in the case of divorce, as a type of domestic liberation; but in the journalistic and general discussion of the matter there is far too much of the mind that works backwards and at random, in the manner of all windows and no walls. Such people say they want divorce, without asking themselves whether they want marriage. Even in order to be divorced it has generally been found necessary to go through the preliminary formality of being married; and unless the nature of this initial act be considered, we might as well be discussing haircutting for the bald or spectacles for the blind. To be divorced is to be in the literal sense unmarried; and there is no sense in a thing being undone when we do not know if it is done.

There is perhaps no worse advice, nine times out of ten, than the advice to do the work that's nearest. It is especially bad when

it means, as it generally does, removing the obstacle that's nearest. It means that men are not to behave like men but like mice; who nibble at the thing that's nearest. The man, like the mouse, undermines what he cannot understand. Because he himself bumps into a thing, he calls it the nearest obstacle; though the obstacle may happen to be the pillar that holds up the whole roof over his head. He industriously removes the obstacle; and in return the obstacle removes him, and much more valuable things than he. This opportunism is perhaps the most unpractical thing in this highly unpractical world. People talk vaguely against destructive criticism; but what is the matter with this criticism is not that it destroys, but that it does not criticise. It is destruction without design. It is taking a complex machine to pieces bit by bit, in any order, without even knowing what the machine is for. And if a man deals with a deadly dynamic machine on the principle of touching the knob that's nearest, he will find out the defects of that cheery philosophy. Now leaving many sincere and serious critics of mod-

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ern marriage on one side for the moment, great masses of modern men and women, who write and talk about marriage, are thus nibbling blindly at it like an army of mice. When the reformers propose, for instance, that divorce should be obtainable after an absence of three years (the absence actually taken for granted in the first military arrangements of the late European War) their readers and supporters could seldom give any sort of logical reason for the period being three years, and not three months or three minutes. They are like people who should say "Give me three feet of dog"; and not care where the cut came. Such persons fail to see a dog as an organic entity; in other words, they cannot make head or tail of it. And the chief thing to say about such reformers of marriage is that they cannot make head or tail of it. They do not know what it is, or what it is meant to be, or what its supporters suppose it to be; they never look at it, even when they are inside it. They do the work that's nearest; which is poking holes in the bottom of a boat under the impression that they are digging in a garden. This question

of what a thing is, and whether it is a garden or a boat, appears to them abstract and academic. They have no notion of how large is the idea they attack; or how relatively small appear the holes that they pick in it.

Thus, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, an intelligent man in other matters, says that there is only a "theological" opposition to divorce, and that it is entirely founded on "certain texts" in the Bible about marriages. This is exactly as if he said that a belief in the brotherhood of men was only founded on certain texts in the Bible, about all men being the children of Adam and Eve. Millions of peasants and plain people all over the world assume marriage to be static, without having ever clapped eyes on any text. Numbers of more modern people, especially after the recent experiments in America, think divorce is a social disease, without having ever bothered about any text. It may be maintained that even in these, or in any one, the idea of marriage is ultimately mystical; and the same may be maintained about the idea of brotherhood. It is obvious that a husband and wife are not

visibly one flesh, in the sense of being one quadruped. It is equally obvious that Paderewski and Jack Johnson are not twins, and probably have not played together at their mother's knee. There is indeed a very important admission, or addition, to be realised here. What is true is this: that if the nonsense of Nietzsche or some such sophist submerged current culture, so that it was the fashion to deny the duties of fraternity; then indeed it might be found that the group which still affirmed fraternity was the original group in whose sacred books was the text about Adam and Eve. Suppose some Prussian professor has opportunely discovered that Germans and lesser men are respectively descended from two such very different monkeys that they are in no sense brothers, but barely cousins (German) any number of times removed. And suppose he proceeds to remove them even further with a hatchet; suppose he bases on this a repetition of the conduct of Cain, saying not so much "Am I my brother's keeper?" as "Is he really my brother?" And suppose this higher philosophy of the hatchet

becomes prevalent in colleges and cultivated circles, as even more foolish philosophies have done. Then I agree it probably will be the Christian, the man who preserves the text about Cain, who will continue to assert that he is still the professor's brother; that he is still the professor's keeper. He may possibly add that, in his opinion, the professor seems to require a keeper.

And that is doubtless the situation in the controversies about divorce and marriage today. It is the Christian church which continues to hold strongly, when the world for some reason has weakened on it, what many others hold at other times. But even then it is barely picking up the shreds and scraps of the subject to talk about a reliance on texts. The vital point in the comparison is this: that human brotherhood means a whole view of life, held in the light of life, and defended, rightly or wrongly, by constant appeals to every aspect of life. The religion that holds it most strongly will hold it when nobody else holds it; that is quite true, and that some of us may be so perverse as to think a point in

favour of the religion. But anybody who holds it at all will hold it as a philosophy, not hung on one text but on a hundred truths. Fraternity may be a sentimental metaphor; I may be suffering a delusion when I hail a Montenegrin peasant as my long lost brother. As a fact, I have my own suspicions about which of us it is that has got lost. But my delusion is not a deduction from one text, or from twenty; it is the expression of a relation that to me at least seems a reality. And what I should say about the idea of a brother, I should say about the idea of a wife.

It is supposed to be very unbusinesslike to begin at the beginning. It is called "abstract and academic principles with which we English, etc., etc." It is still in some strange way considered unpractical to open up inquiries about anything by asking what it is. I happen to have, however, a fairly complete contempt for that sort of practicality; for I know that it is not even practical. My ideal business man would not be one who planked down fifty pounds and said "Here is hard cash; I am a plain man; it is quite indifferent to me whether

I am paying a debt, or giving alms to a beggar, or buying a wild bull or a bathing machine." Despite the infectious heartiness of his tone, I should still, in considering the hard cash, say (like a cabman) "What's this?" I should continue to insist, priggishly, that it was a highly practical point what the money *was;* what it was supposed to stand for, to aim at or to declare; what was the nature of the transaction; or, in short, what the devil the man supposed he was doing. I shall therefore begin by asking, in an equally mystical manner, what in the name of God and the angels a man getting married supposes he is doing. I shall begin by asking what marriage is; and the mere question will probably reveal that the act itself, good or bad, wise or foolish, is of a certain kind; that it is not an inquiry or an experiment or an accident; it may probably dawn on us that it is a promise. It can be more fully defined by saying it is a vow.

Many will immediately answer that it is a rash vow. I am content for the moment to reply that all vows are rash vows. I am not now defending but defining vows; I am point-

ing out that this is a discussion about vows; first, of whether there ought to be vows; and second, of what vows ought to be. Ought a man to break a promise? Ought a man to make a promise? These are philosophic questions; but the philosophic peculiarity of divorce and re-marriage, as compared with free love and no marriage, is that a man breaks and makes a promise at the same moment. It is a highly German philosophy; and recalls the way in which the enemy wishes to celebrate his successful destruction of all treaties by signing some more. If I were breaking a promise, I would do it without promises. But I am very far from minimising the momentous and disputable nature of the vow itself. I shall try to show, in a further article, that this rash and romantic operation is the only furnace from which can come the plain hardware of humanity, the cast-iron resistance of citizenship or the cold steel of common sense; but I am not denying that the furnace is a fire. The vow is a violent and unique thing; though there have been many besides the marriage vow; vows of chivalry, vows

of poverty, vows of celibacy, pagan as well as Christian. But modern fashion has rather fallen out of the habit; and men miss the type for the lack of the parallels. The shortest way of putting the problem is to ask whether being free includes being free to bind oneself. For the vow is a tryst with oneself.

I may be misunderstood if I say, for brevity, that marriage is an affair of honour. The sceptic will be delighted to assent, by saying it is a fight. And so it is, if only with oneself; but the point here is that it necessarily has the touch of the heroic, in which virtue can be translated by *virtus*. Now about fighting, in its nature, there is an implied infinity, or at least a potential infinity. I mean that loyalty in war is loyalty in defeat or even disgrace; it is due to the flag precisely at the moment when the flag nearly falls. We do already apply this to the flag of the nation; and the question is whether it is wise or unwise to apply it to the flag of the family. Of course, it is tenable that we should apply it to neither; that misgovernment in the nation or misery in the citizen would make the desertion of the flag

an act of reason and not treason. I will only say here that, if this were really the limit of national loyalty, some of us would have deserted our nation long ago.

II.—The Superstition of Divorce

TO the two or three articles appearing here on this subject I have given the title of the Superstition of Divorce; and the title is not taken at random. While free love seems to me a heresy, divorce does really seem to me a superstition. It is not only more of a superstition than free love, but much more of a superstition than strict sacramental marriage; and this point can hardly be made too plain. It is the partisans of divorce, not the defenders of marriage, who attach a stiff and senseless sanctity to a mere ceremony, apart from the meaning of the ceremony. It is our opponents, and not we, who hope to be saved by the letter of ritual, instead of the spirit of reality. It is they who hold that vow or violation, loyalty or disloyalty, can all be disposed of by a mysterious and magic rite, performed first in a law-court and

then in a church or a registry office. There is little difference between the two parts of the ritual; except that the law court is much more ritualistic. But the plainest parallels will show anybody that all this is sheer barbarous credulity. It may or may not be superstition for a man to believe he must kiss the Bible to show he is telling the truth. It is certainly the most grovelling superstition for him to believe that, if he kisses the Bible, anything he says will come true. It would surely be the blackest and most benighted Bible-worship to suggest that the mere kiss on the mere book alters the moral quality of perjury. Yet this is precisely what is implied in saying that formal re-marriage alters the moral quality of conjugal infidelity. It may have been a mark of the Dark Ages that Harold should swear on a relic, though he were afterwards foresworn. But surely those ages would have been at their darkest, if he had been content to be sworn on a relic and forsworn on another relic. Yet this is the new altar these reformers would erect for us, out of the mouldy and

meaningless relics of their dead law and their dying religion.

Now we, at any rate, are talking about an idea, a thing of the intellect and the soul; which we feel to be unalterable by legal antics. We are talking about the idea of loyalty; perhaps a fantastic, perhaps only an unfashionable idea, but one we can explain and defend as an idea. Now I have already pointed out that most sane men do admit our ideal in such a case as patriotism or public spirit; the necessity of saving the state to which we belong. The patriot may revile but must not renounce his country; he must curse it to cure it, but not to wither it up. The old pagan citizens felt thus about the city; and modern nationalists feel thus about the nation. But even mere modern internationalists feel it about something; if it is only the nation of mankind. Even the humanitarian does not become a misanthrope and live in a monkey-house. Even a disappointed Collectivist or Communist does not retire into the exclusive society of beavers, because beavers are all communists of the most class-conscious solidarity.

He admits the necessity of clinging to his fellow creatures, and begging them to abandon the use of the possessive pronoun; heart-breaking as his efforts must seem to him after a time. Even a Pacifist does not prefer rats to men, on the ground that the rat community is so pure from the taint of Jingoism as always to leave the sinking ship. In short, everybody recognises that there is *some* ship, large and small, which he ought not to leave, even when he thinks it is sinking.

We may take it then that there are institutions to which we are attached finally; just as there are others to which we are attached temporarily. We go from shop to shop trying to get what we want; but we do not go from nation to nation doing this; unless we belong to a certain group now heading very straight for Pogroms. In the first case it is the threat that we shall withdraw our custom; in the second it is the threat that we shall never withdraw ourselves; that we shall be part of the institution to the last. The time when the shop loses its customers is the time when the city needs its citizens; but it needs

them as critics who will always remain to criticise. I need not now emphasise the deadly need of this double energy of internal reform and external defence; the whole towering tragedy which has eclipsed our earth in our time is but one terrific illustration of it. The hammer-strokes are coming thick and fast now; * and filling the world with infernal thunders; and there is still the iron sound of something unbreakable deeper and louder than all the things that break. We may curse the kings, we may distrust the captains, we may murmur at the very existence of the armies; but we know that in the darkest days that may come to us, no man will desert the flag.

Now when we pass from loyalty to the nation to loyalty to the family, there can be no doubt about the first and plainest difference. The difference is that the family is a thing far more free. The vow is a voluntary loyalty; and the marriage vow is marked among ordinary oaths of allegiance by the fact that the allegiance is also a choice. The man is not only a citizen of the city, but also

* Written at the time of the last great German assaults.

the founder and builder of the city. He is not only a soldier serving the colours, but he has himself artistically selected and combined the colours, like the colours of an individual dress. If it be admissible to ask him to be true to the commonwealth that has made him, it is at least not more illiberal to ask him to be true to the commonwealth he has himself made. If civic fidelity be, as it is, a necessity, it is also in a special sense a constraint. The old joke against patriotism, the Gilbertian irony, congratulated the Englishman on his fine and fastidious taste in being born in England. It made a plausible point in saying "For he might have been a Russian"; though indeed we have lived to see some persons who seemed to think they could be Russians when the fancy took them. If commonsense considers even such involuntary loyalty natural, we can hardly wonder if it thinks voluntary loyalty still more natural. And the small state founded on the sexes is at once the most voluntary and the most natural of all self-governing states. It is not true of Mr. Brown that he might have been a Russian;

but it may be true of Mrs. Brown that she might have been a Robinson.

Now it is not at all hard to see why this small community, so specially free touching its cause, should yet be specially bound touching its effects. It is not hard to see why the vow made most freely is the vow kept most firmly. There are attached to it, by the nature of things, consequences so tremendous that no contract can offer any comparison. There is no contract, unless it be that said to be signed in blood, that can call spirits from the vasty deep; or bring cherubs (or goblins) to inhabit a small modern villa. There is no stroke of the pen which creates real bodies and souls, or makes the characters in a novel come to life. The institution that puzzles intellectuals so much can be explained by the mere material fact (perceptible even to intellectuals) that children are, generally speaking, younger than their parents. "Till death do us part" is not an irrational formula, for those will almost certainly die before they see more than half of the amazing (or alarming) thing they have done.

Such is, in a curt and crude outline, this obvious thing for those to whom it is not obvious. Now I know there are thinking men among those who would tamper with it; and I shall expect some of these to reply to my questions. But for the moment I only ask this question: whether the parliamentary and journalistic divorce movement shows even a shadowy trace of these fundamental truths, regarded as tests. Does it even discuss the nature of a vow, the limits and objects of loyalty, the survival of the family as a small and free state? The writers are content to say that Mr. Brown is uncomfortable with Mrs. Brown, and the last emancipation, for separated couples, seems only to mean that he is still uncomfortable without Mrs. Brown. These are not days in which being uncomfortable is felt as the final test of public action. For the rest, the reformers show statistically that families are in fact so scattered in our industrial anarchy, that they may as well abandon hope of finding their way home again. I am acquainted with that argument for making bad worse and I see it every-

where leading to slavery. Because London Bridge is broken down, we must assume that bridges are not meant to bridge. Because London commercialism and capitalism have copied hell, we are to continue to copy them. Anyhow, some will retain the conviction that the ancient bridge built between the two towers of sex is the worthiest of the great works of the earth.

It is exceedingly characteristic of the dreary decades before the War that the forms of freedom in which they seemed to specialise were suicide and divorce. I am not at the moment pronouncing on the moral problem of either; I am merely noting, as signs of those times, those two true or false counsels of despair; the end of life and the end of love. Other forms of freedom were being increasingly curtailed. Freedom indeed was the one thing that progressives and conservatives alike contemned. Socialists were largely concerned to prevent strikes, by State arbitration; that is, by adding another rich man to give the casting vote beween rich and poor. Even in claiming what they called the right to work

they tacitly surrendered the right to leave off working. Tories were preaching conscription, not so much to defend the independence of England as to destroy the independence of Englishmen. Liberals, of course, were chiefly interested in eliminating liberty, especially touching beer and betting. It was wicked to fight, and unsafe even to argue; for citing any certain and contemporary fact might land one in a libel action. As all these doors were successfully shut in our faces along the chilly and cheerless corridor of progress (with its glazed tiles) the doors of death and divorce alone stood open, or rather opened wider and wider. I do not expect the exponents of divorce to admit any similarity in the two things; yet the passing parallel is not irrelevant. It may enable them to realise the limits within which our moral instincts can, even for the sake of argument, treat this desperate remedy as a normal object of desire. Divorce is for us at best a failure, of which we are more concerned to find and cure the cause than to complete the effects; and we regard a system that produces many divorces as we do a sys-

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tem that drives men to drown and shoot themselves. For instance, it is perhaps the commonest complaint against the existing law that the poor cannot afford to avail themselves of it. It is an argument to which normally I should listen with special sympathy. But while I should condemn the law being a luxury, my first thought will naturally be that divorce and death are only luxuries in a rather rare sense. I should not primarily condole with the poor man on the high price of prussic acid; or on the fact that all precipices of suitable suicidal height were the private property of the landlords. There are other high prices and high precipices I should attack first. I should admit in the abstract that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander; that what is good for the rich is good for the poor; but my first and strongest impression would be that prussic acid sauce is not good for anybody. I fear I should, on the impulse of the moment, pull a poor clerk or artisan back by the coat-tails, if he were jumping over Shakespeare's Cliff, even if Dover sands were strewn with the remains of the

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dukes and bankers who had already taken the plunge.

But in one respect, I will heartily concede, the cult of divorce has differed from the mere cult of death. The cult of death is dead. Those I knew in my youth as young pessimists are now aged optimists. And, what is more to the point at present, even when it was living it was limited; it was a thing of one clique in one class. We know the rule in the old comedy, that when the heroine went mad in white satin, the confidante went mad in white muslin. But when, in some tragedy of the artistic temperament, the painter committed suicide in velvet, it was never implied that the plumber must commit suicide in corduroy. It was never held that Hedda Gabler's housemaid must die in torments on the carpet (trying as her term of service may have been); or that Mrs. Tanqueray's butler must play the Roman fool and die on his own carving knife. That particular form of playing the fool, Roman or otherwise, was an oligarchic privilege in the decadent epoch; and even as such has largely passed with that

epoch. Pessimism, which was never popular, is no longer even fashionable. A far different fate has awaited the other fashion; the other somewhat dismal form of freedom. If divorce is a disease, it is no longer to be a fashionable disease like appendicitis; it is to be made an epidemic like small-pox. As we have already seen, papers and public men today make a vast parade of the necessity of setting the poor man free to get a divorce. Now why are they so mortally anxious that he should be free to get a divorce, and not in the least anxious that he should be free to get anything else? Why are the same people happy, nay almost hilarious, when he gets a divorce, who are horrified when he gets a drink? What becomes of his money, what becomes of his children, where he works, when he ceases to work, are less and less under his personal control. Labour Exchanges, Insurance Cards, Welfare Work, and a hundred forms of police inspection and supervision, have combined for good or evil to fix him more and more strictly to a certain place in society. He is less and less allowed to go to look for a new

job; why is he allowed to go to look for a new wife? He is more and more compelled to recognise a Moslem code about liquor; why is it made so easy for him to escape from his old Christian code about sex? What is the meaning of this mysterious immunity, this special permit for adultery; and why is running away with his neighbour's wife to be the only exhilaration still left open to him? Why must he love as he pleases; when he may not even live as he pleases?

The answer is, I regret to say, that this social campaign, in most though by no means all of its most prominent campaigners, relies in this matter on a very smug and pestilent piece of cant. There are some advocates of democratic divorce who are really advocates of general democratic freedom; but they are the exceptions; I might say, with all respect, that they are the dupes. The omnipresence of the thing in the press and in political society is due to a motive precisely opposite to the motive professed. The modern rulers, who are simply the rich men, are really quite consistent in their attitude to the poor man.

It is the same spirit which takes away his children under the pretence of order, which takes away his wife under the pretence of liberty. That which wishes, in the words of the comic song, to break up the happy home, is primarily anxious not to break up the much more unhappy factory. Capitalism, of course, is at war with the family, for the same reason which has led to its being at war with the Trade Union. This indeed is the only sense in which it is true that capitalism is connected with individualism. Capitalism believes in collectivism for itself and individualism for its enemies. It desires its victims to be individuals, or (in other words) to be atoms. For the word atom, in its clearest meaning (which is none too clear) might be translated as "individual." If there be any bond, if there be any brotherhood, if there be any class loyalty or domestic discipline, by which the poor can help the poor, these emancipators will certainly strive to loosen that bond or lift that discipline in the most liberal fashion. If there be such a brotherhood, these individualists

will redistribute it in the form of individuals; or in other words smash it to atoms.

The masters of modern plutocracy know what they are about. They are making no mistake; they can be cleared of the slander of inconsistency. A very profound and precise instinct has led them to single out the human household as the chief obstacle to their inhuman progress. Without the family we are helpless before the State, which in our modern case is the Servile State. To use a military metaphor, the family is the only formation in which the charge of the rich can be repulsed. It is a force that forms twos as soldiers form fours; and, in every peasant country, has stood in the square house or the square plot of land as infantry have stood in squares against cavalry. How this force operates thus, and why, I will try to explain in the last of these articles. But it is when it is most nearly ridden down by the horsemen of pride and privilege, as in Poland or Ireland, when the battle grows most desperate and the hope most dark, that men begin to understand

why that wild oath in its beginnings was flung beyond the bounds of the world; and what would seem as passing as a vision is made permanent as a vow.

III.—The Superstition of Divorce

THERE has long been a curiously consistent attempt to conceal the fact that France is a Christian country. There have been Frenchmen in the plot, no doubt, and no doubt there have been Frenchmen—though I have myself only found Englishmen—in the derivative attempt to conceal the fact that Balzac was a Christian writer. I began to read Balzac long after I had read the admirers of Balzac; and they had never given me a hint of this truth. I had read that his books were bound in yellow and "quite impudently French"; though I may have been cloudy about why being French should be impudent in a Frenchman. I had read the truer description of "the grimy wizard of the *Comedie Humaine,*" and have lived to learn the truth of it; Balzac certainly is a genius of the type of

that artist he himself describes, who could draw a broomstick so that one knew it had swept the room after a murder. The furniture of Balzac is more alive than the figures of many dramas. For this I was prepared; but not for a certain spiritual assumption which I recognised at once as a historical phenomenon. The morality of a great writer is not the morality he teaches, but the morality he takes for granted. The Catholic type of Christian ethics runs through Balzac's books, exactly as the Puritan type of Christian ethics runs through Bunyan's books. What his professed opinions were I do not know, any more than I know Shakespeare's; but I know that both those great creators of a multitudinous world made it, as compared with other and later writers, on the same fundamental moral plan as the universe of Dante. There can be no doubt about it for any one who can apply as a test the truth I have mentioned; that the fundamental things in a man are not the things he explains, but rather the things he forgets to explain. But here and there Balzac does explain; and with that intellec-

tual concentration Mr. George Moore has acutely observed in that novelist when he is a theorist. And the other day I found in one of Balzac's novels this passage; which, whether or no it would precisely hit Mr. George Moore's mood at this moment, strikes me as a perfect prophecy of this epoch, and might also be a motto for this book: "With the solidarity of the family society has lost that elemental force which Montesquieu defined and called 'honour.' Society has isolated its members the better to govern them, and has divided in order to weaken."

Throughout our youth and the years before the War, the current criticism followed Ibsen in describing the domestic system as a doll's house and the domestic woman as a doll. Mr. Bernard Shaw varied the metaphor by saying that mere custom kept the woman in the home as it keeps the parrot in the cage; and the plays and tales of the period made vivid sketches of a woman who also resembled a parrot in other particulars, rich in raiment, shrill in accent and addicted to saying over and over again what she had been taught

to say. Mr. Granville Barker, the spiritual child of Mr. Bernard Shaw, commented in his clever play of "The Voysey Inheritance" on tyranny, hypocrisy and boredom, as the constituent elements of a "happy English home." Leaving the truth of this aside for the moment, it will be well to insist that the conventionality thus criticised would be even more characteristic of a happy French home. It is not the Englishman's house, but the Frenchman's house that is his castle. It might be further added, touching the essential ethical view of the sexes at least, that the Irishman's house is his castle; though it has been for some centuries a besieged castle. Anyhow, those conventions which were remarked as making domesticity dull, narrow and unnaturally meek and submissive, are particularly powerful among the Irish and the French. From this it will surely be easy, for any lucid and logical thinker, to deduce the fact that the French are dull and narrow, and that the Irish are unnaturally meek and submissive. Mr. Bernard Shaw, being an Irishman who lives among Englishmen, may be conven-

iently taken as the type of the difference; and it will no doubt be found that the political friends of Mr. Shaw, among Englishmen, will be of a wilder revolutionary type than those whom he would have found among Irishmen. We are in a position to compare the meekness of the Fenians with the fury of the Fabians. This deadening monogamic ideal may even, in a larger sense, define and distinguish all the flat subserviency of Clare from all the flaming revolt of Clapham. Nor need we now look far to understand why revolutions have been unknown in the history of France; or why they happen so persistently in the vaguer politics of England. This rigidity and respectability must surely be the explanation of all that incapacity for any civil experiment or explosion, which has always marked that sleepy hamlet of very private houses, which we call the city of Paris. But the same things are true not only of Parisians but of peasants; they are even true of other peasants in the great Alliance. Students of Serbian traditions tell us that the peasant literature lays a special and singular

curse on the violation of marriage; and this may well explain the prim and sheepish pacifism complained of in that people.

In plain words, there is clearly something wrong in the calculation by which it was proved that a housewife must be as much a servant as a housemaid; or which exhibited the domesticated man as being as gentle as the primrose or as conservative as the Primrose League. It is precisely those who have been conservative about the family who have been revolutionary about the state. Those who are blamed for the bigotry or *bourgeois* smugness of their marriage conventions are actually those blamed for the restlessness and violence of their political reforms. Nor is there seriously any difficulty in discovering the cause of this. It is simply that in such a society the government, in dealing with the family, deals with something almost as permanent and self-renewing as itself. There can be a continuous family policy, like a continuous foreign policy. In peasant countries the family fights, it may almost be said that the farm fights. I do not mean merely

that it riots in evil and exceptional times; though this is not unimportant. It was a savage but a sane feature when, in the Irish evictions, the women poured hot water from the windows; it was part of a final falling back on private tools as public weapons. That sort of thing is not only war to the knife, but almost war to the fork and spoon. It was in this grim sense perhaps that Parnell, in that mysterious pun, said that Kettle was a household word in Ireland (it certainly ought to be after its subsequent glories), and in a more general sense it is certain that meddling with the housewife will ultimately mean getting into hot water. But it is not of such crises of bodily struggle that I speak, but of a steady and peaceful pressure from below of a thousand families upon the framework of government. For this a certain spirit of defence and enclosure is essential; and even feudalism was right in feeling that any such affair of honour must be a family affair. It was a true artistic instinct that pictured the pedigree on a coat that protects the body. The free peasant has arms if he has not armorial bearings. He

has not an escutcheon; but he has a shield. Nor do I see why, in a freer and happier society than the present, or even the past, it should not be a blazoned shield. For that is true of pedigree which is true of property; the wrong is not in its being imposed on men, but rather in its being denied to them. Too much capitalism does not mean too many capitalists, but too few capitalists; and so aristocracy sins, not in planting a family tree, but in not planting a family forest.

Anyhow, it is found in practice that the domestic citizen can stand a siege, even by the State; because he has those who will stand by him through thick and thin—especially thin. Now those who hold that the State can be made fit to own all and administer all, can consistently disregard this argument; but it may be said with all respect that the world is more and more disregarding them. If we could find a perfect machine, and a perfect man to work it, it might be a good argument for State Socialism, though an equally good argument for personal despotism. But most of us, I fancy, are now agreed that something of

that social pressure from below which we call freedom is vital to the health of the State; and this it is which cannot be fully exercised by individuals, but only by groups and traditions. Such groups have been many; there have been monasteries; there may be guilds; but there is only one type among them which all human beings have a spontaneous and omnipresent inspiration to build for themselves; and this type is the family.

I had intended this article to be the last of those outlining the elements of this debate; but I shall have to add a short concluding section on the way in which all this is missed in the practical (or rather unpractical) proposals about divorce. Here I will only say that they suffer from the modern and morbid weaknesses of always sacrificing the normal to the abnormal. As a fact the "tyranny, hypocrisy and boredom" complained of are not domesticity, but the decay of domesticity. The case of that particular complaint, in Mr. Granville Barker's play, is itself a proof. The whole point of "The Voysey Inheritance" was that there was no Voysey inheritance.

The only heritage of that family was a highly dishonourable debt. Naturally their family affections had decayed when their whole ideal of property and probity had decayed; and there was little love as well as little honour among thieves. It has yet to be proved that they would have been as much bored if they had had a positive and not a negative heritage; and had worked a farm instead of a fraud. And the experience of mankind points the other way.

IV.—The Superstition of Divorce

I HAVE touched before now on a famous or infamous Royalist who suggested that the people should eat grass; an unfortunate remark perhaps for a Royalist to make; since the regimen is only recorded of a Royal Personage. But there was certainly a simplicity in the solution worthy of a sultan or even a savage chief; and it is this touch of autocratic innocence on which I have mainly insisted touching the social reforms of our day, and especially the social reform known as divorce. I am primarily more concerned with the arbitrary method than with the anarchic result. Very much as the old tyrant would turn any number of men out to grass, so the new tyrant would turn any number of women into grass-widows. Anyhow, to vary the legendary symbolism, it never seems to occur to the king in this fairy

tale that the gold crown on his head is a less, and not a more, sacred and settled ornament than the gold ring on the woman's finger. This change is being achieved by the summary and even secret government which we now suffer; and this would be the first point against it, even if it were really an emancipation; and it is only in form an emancipation. I will not anticipate the details of its defence, which can be offered by others, but I will here conclude for the present by roughly suggesting the practical defences of divorce, as generally given just at present, under four heads. And I will only ask the reader to note that they all have one thing in common; the fact that each argument is also used for all that social reform which plain men are already calling slavery.

First, it is very typical of the latest practical proposals that they are concerned with the case of those who are already separated, and the steps they must take to be divorced. There is a spirit penetrating all our society to-day by which the exception is allowed to alter the rule; the exile to deflect patriotism.

the orphan to depose parenthood, and even the widow or, in this case as we have seen the grass-widow, to destroy the position of the wife. There is a sort of symbol of this tendency in that mysterious and unfortunate nomadic nation which has been allowed to alter so many things, from a crusade in Russia to a cottage in South Bucks. We have been told to treat the wandering Jew as a pilgrim, while we still treat the wandering Christian as a vagabond. And yet the latter is at least trying to get home, like Ulysses; whereas the former is, if anything, rather fleeing from home, like Cain. He who is detached, disgruntled, nondescript, intermediate, is everywhere made the excuse for altering what is common, corporate, traditional and popular. And the alteration is always for the worse. The mermaid never becomes more womanly, but only more fishy. The centaur never becomes more manly, but only more horsy. The Jew cannot really internationalise Christendom; he can only denationalise Christendom. The proletarian does not find it easy to become a small proprietor; he is

finding it far easier to become a slave. So the unfortunate man, who cannot tolerate the woman he has chosen from all the women in the world, is not encouraged to return to her and tolerate her, but encouraged to choose another woman whom he may in due course refuse to tolerate. And in all these cases the argument is the same; that the man in the intermediate state is unhappy. Probably he is unhappy, since he is abnormal; but the point is that he is permitted to loosen the universal bond which has kept millions of others normal. Because he has himself got into a hole, he is allowed to burrow in it like a rabbit and undermine a whole countryside.

Next we have, as we always have touching such crude experiments, an argument from the example of other countries, and especially of new countries. Thus the Eugenists tell me solemnly that there have been very successful Eugenic experiments in America. And they rigidly retain their solemnity (while refusing with many rebukes to believe in mine) when I tell them that one of the Eugenic experiments in America is a chemical experiment;

which consists of changing a black man into the allotropic form of white ashes. It is really an exceedingly Eugenic experiment; since its chief object is to discourage an inter-racial mixture of blood which is not desired. But I do not like this American experiment, however American; and I trust and believe that it is not typically American at all. It represents, I conceive, only one element in the complexity of the great democracy; and goes along with other evil elements; so that I am not at all surprised that the same strange social sections, which permit a human being to be burned alive, also permit the exalted science of Eugenics. It is the same in the milder matter of liquor laws; and we are told that certain rather crude colonials have established prohibition laws, which they try to evade; just as we are told they have established divorce laws, which they are now trying to repeal. For in this case of divorce, at least, the argument from distant precedents has recoiled crushingly upon itself. There is already an agitation for less divorce in Amer-

ica, even while there is an agitation for more divorce in England.

Again, when an argument is based on a need of population, it will be well if those supporting it realise where it may carry them. It is exceedingly doubtful whether population is one of the advantages of divorce; but there is no doubt that it is one of the advantages of polygamy. It is already used in Germany as an argument for polygamy. But the very word will teach us to look even beyond Germany for something yet more remote and repulsive. Mere population, along with a sort of polygamous anarchy, will not appear even as a practical ideal to any one who considers, for instance, how consistently Europe has held the headship of the human race, in face of the chaotic myriads of Asia. If population were the chief test of progress and efficiency, China would long ago have proved itself the most progressive and efficient state. De Quincey summed up the whole of that enormous situation in a sentence which is perhaps more impressive and even appalling than all the perspectives of orient architecture and vistas

of opium vision in the midst of which it comes. "Man is a weed in those regions." Many Europeans, fearing for the garden of the world, have fancied that in some future fatality those weeds may spring up and choke it. But no Europeans have really wished that the flowers should become like the weeds. Even if it were true, therefore, that the loosening of the tie necessarily increased the population; even if this were not contradicted, as it is, by the facts of many countries, we should have strong historical grounds for not accepting the deduction. We should still be suspicious of the paradox that we may encourage large families by abolishing the family.

Lastly, I believe it is part of the defence of the new proposal that even its defenders have found its principle a little too crude. I hear they have added provisions which modify the principle; and which seem to be in substance, first, that a man shall be made responsible for a money payment to the wife he deserts, and second, that the matter shall once again be submitted in some fashion to some magistrate. For my purpose here, it is enough to note

that there is something of the unmistakable savour of the sociology we resist, in these two touching acts of faith, in a cheque-book and in a lawyer. Most of the fashionable reformers of marriage would be faintly shocked at any suggestion that a poor old charwoman might possibly refuse such money, or that a good kind magistrate might not have the right to give such advice. For the reformers of marriage are very respectable people, with some honourable exceptions; and nothing could fit more smoothly into the rather greasy groove of their respectability than the suggestion that treason is best treated with the damages, gentlemen, heavy damages, of Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz; or that tragedy is best treated by the spiritual arbitrament of Mr. Nupkins.

One word should be added to this hasty sketch of the elements of the case. I have deliberately left out the loftiest aspect and argument, that which sees marriage as a divine institution; and that for the logical reason that those who believe in this would not believe in divorce; and I am arguing with those

who do believe in divorce. I do not ask them to assume the worth of my creed or any creed; and I could wish they did not so often ask me to assume the worth of their worthless, poisonous plutocratic modern society. But if it could be shown, as I think it can, that a long historical view and a patient political experience can at last accumulate solid scientific evidence of the vital need of such a vow, then I can conceive no more tremendous tribute than this, to any faith, which made a flaming affirmation from the darkest beginnings, of what the latest enlightenment can only slowly discover in the end.

THE STORY OF THE FAMILY

V.—The Story of the Family

THE most ancient of human institutions has an authority that may seem as wild as anarchy. Alone among all such institutions it begins with a spontaneous attraction; and may be said strictly and not sentimentally to be founded on love instead of fear. The attempt to compare it with coercive institutions complicating later history has led to infinite illogicality in later times. It is as unique as it is universal. There is nothing in any other social relations in any way parallel to the mutual attraction of the sexes. By missing this simple point, the modern world has fallen into a hundred follies. The idea of a general revolt of women against men has been proclaimed with flags and processions, like a revolt of vassals against their lords, of niggers against nigger-drivers, of Poles against Prussians or Irishmen against

Englishmen; for all the world as if we really believed in the fabulous nation of the Amazons. The equally philosophical idea of a general revolt of men against women has been put into a romance by Sir Walter Besant, and into a sociological book by Mr. Belfort Bax. But at the first touch of this truth of an aboriginal attraction, all such comparisons collapse and are seen to be comic. A Prussian does not feel from the first that he can only be happy if he spends his days and nights with a Pole. An Englishman does not think his house empty and cheerless unless it happens to contain an Irishman. A white man does not in his romantic youth dream of the perfect beauty of a black man. A railway magnate seldom writes poems about the personal fascination of a railway porter. All the other revolts against all the other relations are reasonable and even inevitable, because those relations are originally only founded upon force or self-interest. Force can abolish what force can establish; self-interest can terminate a contract when self-interest has dictated the contract. But the love of man and woman is

not an institution that can be abolished, or a contract that can be terminated. It is something older than all institutions or contracts, and something that is certain to outlast them all. All the other revolts are real, because there remains a possibility that the things may be destroyed, or at least divided. You can abolish capitalists; but you cannot abolish males. Prussians can go out of Poland or negroes can be repatriated to Africa; but a man and a woman must remain together in one way or another; and must learn to put up with each other somehow.

These are very simple truths; that is why nobody nowadays seems to take any particular notice of them; and the truth that follows next is equally obvious. There is no dispute about the purpose of Nature in creating such an attraction. It would be more intelligent to call it the purpose of God; for Nature can have no purpose unless God is behind it. To talk of the purpose of Nature is to make a vain attempt to avoid being anthropomorphic, merely by being feminist. It is believing in a goddess because you are too sceptical to be-

lieve in a god. But this is a controversy which can be kept apart from the question, if we content ourselves with saying that the vital value ultimately found in this attraction is, of course, the renewal of the race itself. The child is an explanation of the father and mother; and the fact that it is a human child is the explanation of the ancient human ties connecting the father and mother. The more human, that is the less bestial, is the child, the more lawful and lasting are the ties. So far from any progress in culture or the sciences tending to loosen the bond, any such progress must logically tend to tighten it. The more things there are for the child to learn, the longer he must remain at the natural school for learning them; and the longer his teachers must at least postpone the dissolution of their partnership. This elementary truth is hidden to-day in vast masses of vicarious, indirect and artificial work, with the fundamental fallacy of which I shall deal in a moment. Here I speak of the primary position of the human group, as it has stood through unthinkable ages of waxing and waning civilisations;

often unable to delegate any of its work, always unable to delegate all of it. In this, I repeat, it will always be necessary for the two teachers to remain together, in proportion as they have anything to teach. One of the shapeless sea-beasts, that merely detaches itself from its offspring and floats away, could float away to a submarine divorce court, or an advanced club founded on free-love for fishes. The sea-beast might do this, precisely because the sea-beast's offspring need do nothing; because it has not got to learn the polka or the multiplication table. All these are truisms but they are also truths, and truths that will return; for the present tangle of semi-official substitutes is not only a stop-gap, but one that is not big enough to stop the gap. If people cannot mind their own business, it cannot possibly be more economical to pay them to mind each other's business; and still less to mind each other's babies. It is simply throwing away a natural force and then paying for an artificial force; as if a man were to water a plant with a hose while holding up an umbrella to protect it from the rain. The

whole really rests on a plutocratic illusion of an infinite supply of servants. When we offer any other system as a "career for women," we are really proposing that an infinite number of them should become servants, of a plutocratic or bureaucratic sort. Ultimately, we are arguing that a woman should not be a mother to her own baby, but a nursemaid to somebody else's baby. But it will not work, even on paper. We cannot all live by taking in each other's washing, especially in the form of pinafores. In the last resort, the only people who either can or will give individual care, to each of the individual children, are their individual parents. The expression as applied to those dealing with changing crowds of children is a graceful and legitimate flourish of speech.

This triangle of truisms, of father, mother and child, cannot be destroyed; it can only destroy those civilisations which disregard it. Most modern reformers are merely bottomless sceptics, and have no basis on which to rebuild; and it is well that such reformers should realise that there is something they

cannot reform. You can put down the mighty from their seat; you can turn the world upside down, and there is much to be said for the view that it may then be the right way up. But you cannot create a world in which the baby carries the mother. You cannot create a world in which the mother has not authority over the baby. You can waste your time in trying; by giving votes to babies or proclaiming a republic of infants in arms. You can say, as an educationist said the other day, that small children should "criticise, question authority and suspend their judgment." I do not know why he did not go on to say that they should earn their own living, pay income tax to the state, and die in battle for the fatherland; for the proposal evidently is that children shall have no childhood. But you can, if you find entertainment in such games, organise "representative government" among little boys and girls, and tell them to take their legal and constitutional responsibilities as seriously as possible. In short, you can be crazy; but you cannot be consistent. You cannot really carry your own principle

back to the aboriginal group, and really apply it to the mother and the baby. You will not act on you own theory in the simplest and most practical of all possible cases. You are not quite so mad as that.

This nucleus of natural authority has always existed in the midst of more artificial authorities. It has always been regarded as something in the literal sense individual; that is, as an absolute that could not really be divided. A baby was not even a baby apart from its mother; it was something else, most probably a corpse. It was always recognised as standing in a peculiar relation to government; simply because it was one of the few things that had not been made by government; and could to some extent come into existence without the support of government. Indeed the case for it is too strong to be stated. For the case for it is that there is nothing like it; and we can only find faint parallels to it in those more elaborate and painful powers and institutions that are its inferiors. Thus the only way of conveying it is to compare it to a nation; although, compared to it,

national divisions are as modern and formal as national anthems. Thus I may often use the metaphor of a city; though in its presence a citizen is as recent as a city clerk. It is enough to note here that everybody does know by intuition and admit by implication that a family is a solid fact, having a character and colour like a nation. The truth can be tested by the most modern and most daily experiences. A man does say "That is the sort of thing the Browns will like"; however tangled and interminable a psychological novel he might compose on the shades of difference between Mr. and Mrs. Brown. A woman does say "I don't like Jemima seeing so much of the Robinsons"; and she does not always, in the scurry of her social or domestic duties, pause to distinguish the optimistic materialism of Mrs. Robinson from the more acid cynicism which tinges the hedonism of Mr. Robinson. There is a colour of the household inside, as conspicuous as the colour of the house outside. That colour is a blend, and if any tint in it predominate it is generally that preferred by Mrs. Robinson. But,

like all composite colours, it is a separate colour; as separate as green is from blue and yellow. Every marriage is a sort of wild balance; and in every case the compromise is as unique as an eccentricity. Philanthropists walking in the slums often see the compromise in the street, and mistake it for a fight. When they interfere, they are thoroughly thumped by both parties; and serve them right, for not respecting the very institution that brought them into the world.

The first thing to see is that this enormous normality is like a mountain; and one that is capable of being a volcano. Every abnormality that is now opposed to it is like a molehill; and the earnest sociological organisers of it are exceedingly like moles. But the mountain is a volcano in another sense also; as suggested in that tradition of the southern fields fertilised by larva. It has a creative as well as a destructive side; and it only remains, in this part of the analysis, to note the political effect of this extra-political institution, and the political ideals of which it has been the

champion; and perhaps the only permanent champion.

The ideal for which it stands in the state is liberty. It stands for liberty for the very simple reason with which this rough analysis started. It is the only one of these institutions that is at once necessary and voluntary. It is the only check on the state that is bound to renew itself as eternally as the state, and more naturally than the state. Every sane man recognises that unlimited liberty is anarchy, or rather is nonentity. The civic idea of liberty is to give the citizen a province of liberty; a limitation within which a citizen is a king. This the only way in which truth can ever find refuge from public persecution, and the good man survive the bad government. But the good man by himself is no match for the city. There must be balanced against it another ideal institution, and in that sense an immortal institution. So long as the state is the only ideal institution the state will call on the citizen to sacrifice himself, and therefore will not have the smallest scruple in sacrificing the citizen. The state consists of coer-

cion; and must always be justified from its own point of view in extending the bounds of coercion; as, for instance, in the case of conscription. The only thing that can be set up to check or challenge this authority is a voluntary law and a voluntary loyalty. That loyalty is the protection of liberty, in the only sphere where liberty can fully dwell. It is a principle of the constitution that the King never dies. It is the whole principle of the family that the citizen never dies. There must be a heraldry and heredity of freedom; a tradition of resistance to tyranny. A man must be not only free, but free-born.

Indeed, there is something in the family that might loosely be called anarchist; and more correctly called amateur. As there seems something almost vague about its voluntary origin, so there seems something vague about its voluntary organisation. The most vital function it performs, perhaps the most vital function that anything can perform, is that of education; but its type of early education is far too essential to be mistaken for instruction. In a thousand things it works

rather by rule of thumb than rule of theory. To take a commonplace and even comic example, I doubt if any text-book or code of rules has ever contained any directions about standing a child in a corner. Doubtless when the modern process is complete, and the coercive principle of the state has entirely extinguished the voluntary element of the family, there will be some exact regulation or restriction about the matter. Possibly it will say that the corner must be an angle of at least ninety-five degrees. Possibly it will say that the converging line of any ordinary corner tends to make a child squint. In fact I am certain that if I said casually, at a sufficient number of tea-tables, that corners made children squint, it would rapidly become a universally received dogma of popular science. For the modern world will accept no dogmas upon any authority; but it will accept any dogmas upon no authority. Say that a thing is so, according to the Pope or the Bible, and it will be dismissed as a superstition without examination. But preface your remark merely with "they say" or "don't you know that?"

or try (and fail) to remember the name of some professor mentioned in some newspaper; and the keen rationalism of the modern mind will accept every word you say. This parenthesis is not so irrelevant as it may appear, for it will be well to remember that when a rigid officialism breaks in upon the voluntary compromises of the home, that officialism itself will be only rigid in its action and will be exceedingly limp in its thought. Intellectually it will be at least as vague as the amateur arrangements of the home, and the only difference is that the domestic arrangements are in the only real sense practical; that is, they are founded on experiences that have been suffered. The others are what is now generally called scientific; that is, they are founded on experiments that have not yet been made. As a matter of fact, instead of invading the family with the blundering bureaucracy that mismanages the public services, it would be far more philosophical to work the reform the other way round. It would be really quite as reasonable to alter the laws of the nation so as to resemble the

laws of the nursery. The punishments would be far less horrible, far more humorous, and far more really calculated to make men feel they had made fools of themselves. It would be a pleasant change if a judge, instead of putting on the black cap, had to put on the dunce's cap; or if we could stand a financier in his own corner.

Of course this opinion is rare, and reactionary—whatever that may mean. Modern education is founded on the principle that a parent is more likely to be cruel than anybody else. It passes over the obvious fact that he is *less* likely to be cruel than anybody else. Anybody may happen to be cruel; but the first chances of cruelty come with the whole colourless and indifferent crowd of total strangers and mechanical mercenaries, whom it is now the custom to call in as infallible agents of improvement; policemen, doctors, detectives, inspectors, instructors, and so on. They are automatically given arbitrary power because there are here and there such things as criminal parents; as if there were no such things as criminal doctors or criminal school-

masters. A mother is not always judicious about her child's diet; so it is given into the control of Dr. Crippen. A father is thought not to teach his sons the purest morality; so they are put under the tutorship of Eugene Aram. These celebrated criminals are no more rare in their respective professions than the cruel parents are in the profession of parenthood. But indeed the case is far stronger than this; and there is no need to rely on the case of such criminals at all. The ordinary weaknesses of human nature will explain all the weaknesses of bureaucracy and business government all over the world. The official need only be an ordinary man to be more indifferent to other people's children than to his own; and even to sacrifice other people's family prosperity to his own. He may be bored; he may be bribed; he may be brutal, for any one of the thousand reasons that ever made a man a brute. All this elementary common sense is entirely left out of account in our educational and social systems of today. It is assumed that the hireling will *not* flee, and that solely because he is a hireling.

It is denied that the shepherd will lay down his life for the sheep; or for that matter, even that the she-wolf will fight for the cubs. We are to believe that mothers are inhuman; but not that officials are human. There are unnatural parents, but there are no natural passions; at least, there are none where the fury of King Lear dared to find them—in the beadle. Such is the latest light on the education of the young; and the same principle that is applied to the child is applied to the husband and wife. Just as it assumes that a child will certainly be loved by anybody except his mother, so it assumes that a man can be happy with anybody except the one woman he has himself chosen for his wife.

Thus the coercive spirit of the state prevails over the free promise of the family, in the shape of formal officialism. But this is not the most coercive of the coercive elements in the modern commonwealth. An even more rigid and ruthless external power is that of industrial employment and unemployment. An even more ferocious enemy of the family is the factory. Between these modern me-

chanical things the ancient natural institution is not being reformed or modified or even cut down; it is being torn in pieces. It is not only being torn in pieces in the sense of a true metaphor, like a living thing caught in a hideous clockwork of manufacture. It is being literally torn in pieces, in that the husband may go to one factory, the wife to another, and the child to a third. Each will become the servant of a separate financial group, which is more and more gaining the political power of a feudal group. But whereas feudalism received the loyalty of families, the lords of the new servile state will receive only the loyalty of individuals; that is, of lonely men and even of lost children.

It is sometimes said that Socialism attacks the family; which is founded on little beyond the accident that some Socialists believe in free-love. I have been a Socialist, and I am no longer a Socialist, and at no time did I believe in free-love. It is true, I think in a large and unconscious sense, that State Socialism encourages the general coercive

claim I have been considering. But if it be true that Socialism attacks the family in theory, it is far more certain that Capitalism attacks it in practice. It is a paradox, but a plain fact, that men never notice a thing as long as it exists in practice. Men who will note a heresy will ignore an abuse. Let any one who doubts the paradox imagine the newspapers formally printing along with the Honours' List a price list, for peerages and knighthoods; though everybody knows they are bought and sold. So the factory is destroying the family in fact; and need depend on no poor mad theorist who dreams of destroying it in fancy. And what is destroying it is nothing so plausible as free-love; but something rather to be described as an enforced fear. It is economic punishment more terrible than legal punishment, which may yet land us in slavery as the only safety.

From its first days in the forest this human group had to fight against wild monsters; and so it is now fighting against these wild machines. It only managed to survive then, and it will only manage to survive now, by a

strong internal sanctity; a tacit oath or dedication deeper than that of the city or the tribe. But though this silent promise was always present, it took at a certain turning point of our history a special form which I shall try to sketch in the next chapter. That turning point was the creation of Christendom by the religion which created it. Nothing will destroy the sacred triangle; and even the Christian faith, the most amazing revolution that ever took place in the mind, served only in a sense to turn that triangle upside down. It held up a mystical mirror in which the order of the three things was reversed; and added a holy family of child, mother and father to the human family of father, mother and child.

THE STORY OF THE VOW

VI.—The Story of the Vow

CHARLES LAMB, with his fine fantastic instinct for combinations that are also contrasts, has noted somewhere a contrast between St. Valentine and valentines. There seems a comic incongruity in such lively and frivolous flirtations still depending on the date and title of an ascetic and celibate bishop of the Dark Ages. The paradox lends itself to his treatment, and there is a truth in his view of it. Perhaps it may seem even more of a paradox to say there is no paradox. In such cases unification appears more provocative than division; and it may seem idly contradictory to deny the contradiction. And yet in truth there is no contradiction. In the deepest sense there is a very real similarity, which puts St. Valentine and his valentines on one side, and most of the modern world on the

other. I should hesitate to ask even a German professor to collect, collate and study carefully all the valentines in the world, with the object of tracing a philosophical principle running through them. But if he did, I have no doubt about the philosophic principle he would find. However trivial, however imbecile, however vulgar or vapid or stereotyped the imagery of such things might be, it would always involve one idea, the same idea that makes lovers laboriously chip their initials on a tree or a rock, in a sort of monogram of monogamy. It may be a cockney trick to tie one's love on a tree; though Orlando did it, and would now doubtless be arrested by the police for breaking the bye-laws of the Forest of Arden. I am not here concerned especially to commend the habit of cutting one's own name and private address in large letters on the front of the Parthenon, across the face of the Sphinx, or in any other nook or corner where it may chance to arrest the sentimental interest of posterity. But like many other popular things, of the sort that can generally be found in Shakespeare, there is a meaning

in it that would probably be missed by a less popular poet, like Shelley. There is a very permanent truth in the fact that two free persons deliberately tie themselves to a log of wood. And it is the idea of tying oneself to something that runs through all this old amorous allegory like a pattern of fetters. There is always the notion of hearts chained together, or skewered together, or in some manner secured; there is a security that can only be called captivity. That it frequently fails to secure itself has nothing to do with the present point. The point is that every philosophy of sex must fail, which does not account for its ambition of fixity, as well as for its experience of failure. There is nothing to make Orlando commit himself on the sworn evidence of the nearest tree. He is not bound to be bound; he is under constraint, but nobody constrains him to be under constraint. In short, Orlando took a vow to marry precisely as Valentine took a vow not to marry. Nor could any ascetic, without being a heretic, have asserted in the wildest reactions of asceticism, that the vow of Orlando was not

lawful as well as the vow of Valentine. But it is a notable fact that even when it was not lawful, it was still a vow. Through all that mediæval culture, which has left us the legend of romance, there ran this pattern of a chain, which was felt as binding even where it ought not to bind. The lawless loves of mediæval legends all have their own law, and especially their own loyalty, as in the tales of Tristram or Lancelot. In this sense we might say that mediæval profligacy was more fixed than modern marriage. I am not here discussing either modern or mediæval ethics, in the matter of what they did say or ought to say of such things. I am only noting as a historical fact the insistence of the mediæval imagination, even at its wildest, upon one particular idea. That idea is the idea of the vow. It might be the vow which St. Valentine took; it might be a lesser vow which he regarded as lawful; it might be a wild vow which he regarded as quite lawless. But the whole society which made such festivals and bequeathed to us such traditions was full of the idea of vows; and we must recognise

this notion, even if we think it nonsensical, as the note of the whole civilisation. And Valentine and the valentine both express it for us; even more if we feel them both as exaggerated, or even as exaggerating opposites. Those extremes meet; and they meet in the same place. Their trysting place is by the tree on which the lover hung his love-letters. And even if the lover hung himself on the tree, instead of his literary compositions, even that act had about it also an indefinable flavour of finality.

It is often said by the critics of Christian origins that certain ritual feasts, processions or dances are really of pagan origin. They might as well say that our legs are of pagan origin. Nobody ever disputed that humanity was human before it was Christian; and no Church manufactured the legs with which men walked or danced, either in a pilgrimage or a ballet. What can really be maintained, so as to carry not a little conviction, is this: that where such a Church has existed it has *preserved* not only the processions but the dances; not only the cathedral but the car-

nival. One of the chief claims of Christian civilisation is to have preserved things of pagan origin. In short, in the old religious countries men *continue* to dance; while in the new scientific cities they are often content to drudge.

But when this saner view of history is realised, there does remain something more mystical and difficult to define. Even heathen things are Christian when they have been preserved by Christianity. Chivalry is something recognisably different even from the *virtus* of Virgil. Charity is something exceedingly different from the plain city of Homer. Even our patriotism is something more subtle than the undivided lover of the city; and the change is felt in the most permanent things, such as the love of landscape or the love of woman. To define the differentiation in all these things will always be hopelessly difficult. But I would here suggest one element in the change which is perhaps too much neglected; which at any rate ought not to be neglected; the nature of a vow. I might express it by saying that pagan antiquity was

the age of status; that Christian mediævalism was the age of vows; and that sceptical modernity has been the age of contracts; or rather has tried to be, and has failed.

The outstanding example of status was slavery. Needless to say slavery does not mean tyranny; indeed it need only be regarded relatively to other things to be regarded as charity. The idea of slavery is that large numbers of men are meant and made to do the heavy work of the world, and that others, while taking the margin of profits, must nevertheless support them while they do it. The point is not whether the work is excessive or moderate, or whether the condition is comfortable or uncomfortable. The point is that his work is chosen for the man, his status fixed for the man; and this status is forced on him by law. As Mr. Balfour said about Socialism, that is slavery and nothing else is slavery. The slave might well be, and often was, far more comfortable than the average free labourer; and certainly far more lazy than the average peasant. He was a slave because he

had not reached his position by choice, or promise, or bargain, but merely by status.

It is admitted that when Christianity had been for some time at work in the world, this ancient servile status began in some mysterious manner to disappear. I suggest here that one of the forms which the new spirit took was the importance of the vow. Feudalism, for instance, differed from slavery chiefly because feudalism was a vow. The vassal put his hands in those of his lord, and vowed to be his man; but there was an accent on the noun substantive as well as on the possessive pronoun. By swearing to be his man, he proved he was not his chattel. Nobody exacts a promise from a pickaxe, or expects a poker to swear everlasting friendship with the tongs. Nobody takes the word of a spade; and nobody ever took the word of a slave. It marks at least a special stage of transition that the form of freedom was essential to the fact of service, or even of servitude. In this way it is not a coincidence that the word homage actually means manhood. And if there was vow instead of status even in the static parts of

Feudalism, it is needless to say that there was a wilder luxuriance of vows in the more adventurous part of it. The whole of what we call chivalry was one great vow. Vows of chivalry varied infinitely from the most solid to the most fantastic; from a vow to give all the spoils of conquest to the poor to a vow to refrain from shaving until the first glimpse of Jerusalem. As I have remarked, this rule of loyalty, even in the unruly exceptions which proved the rule, ran through all the romances and songs of the troubadours; and there were always vows even when they were very far from being marriage vows. The idea is as much present in what they called the Gay Science, of love, as in what they called the Divine Science, of theology. The modern reader will smile at the mention of these things as sciences; and will turn to the study of sociology, ethnology and psycho-analysis; for if these are sciences (about which I would not divulge a doubt) at least nobody would insult them by calling them either gay or divine.

I mean here to emphasise the presence, and

not even to settle the proportion, of this new notion in the middle ages. But the critic will be quite wrong if he thinks it enough to answer that all these things affected only a cultured class, not corresponding to the servile class of antiquity. When we come to workmen and small tradesmen, we find the same vague yet vivid presence of the spirit that can only be called the vow. In this sense there was a chivalry of trades as well as a chivalry of orders of knighthood; just as there was a heraldry of shop-signs as well as a heraldry of shields. Only it happens that in the enlightenment and liberation of the sixteenth century, the heraldry of the rich was preserved, and the heraldry of the poor destroyed. And there is a sinister symbolism in the fact that almost the only emblem still hung above a shop is that of the three balls of Lombardy. Of all those democratic glories nothing can now glitter in the sun; except the sign of the golden usury that has devoured them all. The point here, however, is that the trade or craft had not only something like the crest, but something like the vow of knighthood. There

was in the position of the guildsman the same basic notion that belonged to knights and even to monks. It was the notion of the free choice of a fixed estate. We can realise the moral atmosphere if we compare the system of the Christian guilds, not only with the status of the Greek and Roman slaves, but with such a scheme as that of the Indian castes. The oriental caste has some of the qualities of the occidental guild; especially the valuable quality of tradition and the accumulation of culture. Men might be proud of their castes, as they were proud of their guilds. But they had never chosen their castes, as they have chosen their guilds. They had never, within historic memory, even collectively created their castes, as they collectively created their guilds. Like the slave system, the caste system was older than history. The heathens of modern Asia, as much as the heathens of ancient Europe, lived by the very spirit of status. Status in a trade has been accepted like status in a tribe; and that in a tribe of beasts and birds rather than men. The fisherman continued to be a fisherman as the fish continued

to be a fish; and the hunter would no more turn into a cook than his dog would try its luck as a cat. Certainly his dog would not be found prostrated before the mysterious altar of Pasht, barking or whining a wild, lonely, and individual vow that he at all costs would become a cat. Yet that was the vital revolt and innovation of vows, as compared with castes or slavery; as when a man vowed to be a monk, or the son of a cobbler saluted the shrine of St. Joseph, the patron saint of carpenters. When he had entered the guild of the carpenters he did indeed find himself responsible for a very real loyalty and discipline; but the whole social atmosphere surrounding his entrance was full of the sense of a separate and personal decision. There is one place where we can still find this sentiment; the sentiment of something at once free and final. We can feel it, if the service is properly understood, before and after the marriage vows at any ordinary wedding in any ordinary church.

Such, in very vague outline, has been the historical nature of vows; and the unique part

they played in that mediæval civilisation out of which modern civilisation rose—or fell. We can now consider, a little less cloudily than it is generally considered nowadays, whether we really think vows are good things; whether they ought to be broken; and (as would naturally follow) whether they ought to be made. But we can never judge it fairly till we face, as I have tried to suggest, this main fact of history; that the personal pledge, feudal or civic or monastic, was the way in which the world did escape from the system of slavery in the past. For the modern break-down of mere contract leaves it still doubtful if there be any other way of escaping it in the future.

The idea, or at any rate the ideal, of the thing called a vow is fairly obvious. It is to combine the fixity that goes with finality with the self-respect that only goes with freedom. The man is a slave who is his own master, and a king who is his own ancestor. For all kinds of social purposes he has the calculable orbit of the man in the caste or the servile state; but in the story of his own soul he is still pur-

suing, at great peril, his own adventure. As seen by his neighbours, he is as safe as if immured in a fortress; but as seen by himself he may be for ever careering through the sky or crashing towards the earth in a flying-ship. What is socially humdrum is produced by what is individually heroic; and a city is made not merely of citizens but knight-errants. It is needless to point out the part played by the monastery in civilising Europe in its most barbaric interregnum; and even those who still denounce the monasteries will be found denouncing them for these two extreme and apparently opposite eccentricities. They are blamed for the rigid character of their collective routine; and also for the fantastic character of their individual fanaticism. For the purposes of this part of the argument, it would not matter if the marriage vow produced the most austere discomforts of the monastic vow. The point for the present is that it was sustained by a sense of free will; and the feeling that its evils were not accepted but chosen. The same spirit ran through all the guilds and popular arts and spontaneous social systems

of the whole civilisation. It had all the discipline of an army; but it was an army of volunteers.

The civilisation of vows was broken up when Henry the Eighth broke his own vow of marriage. Or rather, it was broken up by a new cynicism in the ruling powers of Europe, of which that was the almost accidental expression in England. The monasteries, that had been built by vows, were destroyed. The guilds, that had been regiments of volunteers, were dispersed. The sacramental nature of marriage was denied; and many of the greatest intellects of the new movement, like Milton, already indulged in a very modern idealisation of divorce. The progress of this sort of emancipation advanced step by step with the progress of that aristocratic ascendancy which has made the history of modern England; with all its sympathy with personal liberty, and all its utter lack of sympathy with popular life. Marriage not only became less of a sacrament but less of a sanctity. It threatened to become not only a contract, but a contract that could not be kept. For this

one question has retained a strange symbolic supremacy amid all the similar questions, which seems to perpetuate the coincidence of the origin. It began with divorce for a king; and it is now ending in divorces for a whole kingdom.

The modern era that followed can be called the era of contract; but it can still more truly be called the era of leonine contract. The nobles of the new time first robbed the people, and then offered to bargain with them. It would not be an exaggeration to say that they first robbed the people, and then offered to cheat them. For their rents were competitive rents, their economics competitive economics, their ethics competitive ethics; they applied not only legality but pettifogging. No more was heard of the customary rents of the mediæval estates; just as no more was heard of the standard wages of the mediæval guilds. The object of the whole process was to isolate the individual poor man in his dealings with the individual rich man; and then offer to buy and sell with him, though it must necessarily be himself that was bought and

sold. In the matter of labour, that is, though a man was supposed to be in the position of a seller, he was more and more really in the possession of a slave. Unless the tendency be reversed, he will probably become admittedly a slave. That is to say, the word slave will never be used; for it is always easy to find an inoffensive word; but he will be admittedly a man legally bound to certain social service, in return for economic security. In other words, the modern experiment of mere contract has broken down. Trusts as well as Trades' Unions express the fact that it has broken down. Social reform, Socialism, Guild Socialism, Syndicalism, even organised philanthropy, are so many ways of saying that it has broken down. The substitute for it may be the old one of status; but it must be something having some of the stability of status. So far history has found only one way of combining that sort of stability with any sort of liberty. In this sense there is a meaning in the much misused phrase about the army of industry. But the army must be stiffened

either by the discipline of conscripts or by the vows of volunteers.

If we may extend the doubtful metaphor of an army of industry to cover the yet weaker phrase about captains of industry, there is no doubt about what those captains at present command. They work for a centralised discipline in every department. They erect a vast apparatus of supervision and inspection; they support all the modern restrictions touching drink and hygiene. They may be called the friends of temperance or even of happiness; but even their friends would not call them the friends of freedom. There is only one form of freedom which they tolerate; and that is the sort of sexual freedom which is covered by the legal fiction of divorce. If we ask why this liberty is alone left, when so many liberties are lost, we shall find the answer in the summary of this chapter. They are trying to break the vow of the knight as they broke the vow of the monk. They recognise the vow as the vital antithesis to servile status; the alternative and therefore the antagonist. Marriage makes a small state

within the state, which resists all such regimentation. That bond breaks all other bonds; that law is found stronger than all later and lesser laws. They desire the democracy to be sexually fluid, because the making of small nuclei is like the making of small nations. Like small nations, they are a nuisance to the mind of imperial scope. In short, what they fear, in the most literal sense, is home rule.

Men can always be blind to a thing so long as it is big enough. It is so difficult to see the world in which we live, that I know that many will see all I have said here of slavery as a nonsensical nightmare. But if my association of divorce with slavery seems only a far-fetched and theoretical paradox, I should have no difficulty in replacing it by a concrete and familiar picture. Let them merely remember the time when they read "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and ask themselves whether the oldest and simplest of the charges against slavery has not always been the breaking up of families.

THE TRAGEDIES OF MARRIAGE

VII.—The Tragedies of Marriage

THERE is one view very common among the liberal-minded which is exceedingly fatiguing to the clear-headed. It is symbolised in the sort of man who says, "These ruthless bigots will refuse to bury me in consecrated ground, because I have always refused to be baptised." A clear-headed person can easily conceive his point of view, in so far as he happens to think that baptism does not matter. But the clear-headed will be completely puzzled when they ask themselves why, if he thinks that baptism does not matter, he should think that burial does matter. If it is in no way imprudent for a man to keep himself from a consecrated font, how can it be inhuman for other people to keep him from a consecrated field? It is surely much nearer to mere superstition to attach importance to what is done to a dead

body than to a live baby. I can understand a man thinking both superstitious, or both sacred; but I cannot see why he should grumble that other people do not give him as sanctities what he regards as superstitions. He is merely complaining of being treated as what he declares himself to be. It is as if a man were to say, "My persecutors still refuse to make me king, out of mere malice because I am a strict republican." Or it is as if he said, "These heartless brutes are so prejudiced against a teetotaler, that they won't even give him a glass of brandy."

The fashion of divorce would not be a modern fashion if it were not full of this touching fallacy. A great deal of it might be summed up as a most illogical and fanatical appetite for getting married in churches. It is as if a man should practice polygamy out of sheer greed for wedding cake. Or it is as if he provided his household with new shoes, entirely by having them thrown after the wedding carriage when he went off with a new wife. There are other ways of procuring cake or purchasing shoes; and there are other ways

of setting up a human establishment. What is unreasonable is the request which the modern man really makes of the religious institutions of his fathers. The modern man wants to buy one shoe without the other; to obtain one half of a supernatural revelation without the other. The modern man wants to eat his wedding cake and have it, too.

I am not basing this book on the religious argument, and therefore I will not pause to inquire why the old Catholic institutions of Christianity seem to be especially made the objects of these unreasonable complaints. As a matter of fact nobody does propose that some ferocious Anti-Semite like M. Drumont should be buried as a Jew with all the rites of the Synagogue. But the broad-minded were furious because Tolstoi, who had denounced Russian orthodoxy quite as ferociously, was not buried as orthodox, with all the rites of the Russian Church. Nobody does insist that a man who wishes to have fifty wives when Mahomet allowed him five, must have his fifty with the full approval of Mahomet's religion. But the broad-minded are extremely bitter be-

cause a Christian who wishes to have several wives when his own promise bound him to one, is not allowed to violate his vow at the same altar at which he made it. Nobody does insist on Baptists totally immersing people who totally deny the advantages of being totally immersed. Nobody ever did expect Mormons to receive the open mockers of the Book of Mormon, nor Christian Scientists to let their churches be used for exposing Mrs. Eddy as an old fraud. It is only of the forms of Christianity making the Catholic claim that such inconsistent claims are made. And even the inconsistency is, I fancy, a tribute to the acceptance of the Catholic idea in a catholic fashion. It may be that men have an obscure sense that nobody need belong to the Mormon religion and every one does ultimately belong to the Church; and though he may have made a few dozen Mormon marriages in a wandering and entertaining life, he will really have nowhere to go to if he does not somehow find his way back to the churchyard. But all this concerns the general theological question and not the matter involved here, which is

merely historical and social. The point here is that it is at least superficially inconsistent to ask institutions for a formal approval, which they can only give by an inconsistency.

I have put first the question of what is marriage. And we are now in a position to ask more clearly what is divorce. It is not merely the negation or neglect of marriage; for any one can always neglect marriage. It is not the dissolution of the legal obligation of marriage, or even the legal obligation of monogamy; for the simple reason that no such obligation exists. Any man in modern London may have a hundred wives if he does not call them wives; or rather, if he does not go through certain more or less mystical ceremonies in order to assert that they are wives. He might create a certain social coolness round his household, a certain fading of his general popularity. But that is not created by law, and could not be prevented by law. As the late Lord Salisbury very sensibly observed about boycotting in Ireland, "How can you make a law to prevent people going out of the room when somebody they don't like comes

into it?" We cannot be forcibly introduced to a polygamist by a policeman. It would not be an assertion of social liberty, but a denial of social liberty, if we found ourselves practically obliged to associate with all the profligates in society. But divorce is not in this sense mere anarchy. On the contrary divorce is in this sense respectability; and even a rigid excess of respectability. Divorce in this sense might indeed be not unfairly called snobbery. The definition of divorce, which concerns us here, is that it is the attempt to give respectability, and not liberty. It is the attempt to give a certain social status, and not a legal status. It is indeed supposed that this can be done by the alteration of certain legal forms; and this will be more or less true according to the extent to which law as such overawed public opinion, or was valued as a true expression of public opinion. If a man divorced in the large-minded fashion of Henry the Eighth pleaded his legal title among the peasantry of Ireland, for instance, I think he would find a difference still existing between respectability and religion. But

the peculiar point here is that many are claiming the sanction of religion as well as of respectability. They would attach to their very natural and sometimes very pardonable experiments a certain atmosphere, and even glamour, which has undoubtedly belonged to the status of marriage in historic Christendom. But before they make this attempt, it would be well to ask why such a dignity ever appeared or in what it consisted. And I fancy we shall find ourselves confronted with the very simple truth, that the dignity arose wholly and entirely out of the fidelity; and that the glamour merely came from the vow. People were regarded as having a certain dignity because they were dedicated in a certain way; as bound to certain duties and, if it be preferred, to certain discomforts. It may be irrational to endure these discomforts; it may even be irrational to respect them. But it is certainly much more irrational to respect them, and then artificially transfer the same respect to the absence of them. It is as if we were to expect uniforms to be saluted when armies were disbanded; and ask people to

cheer a soldier's coat when it did not contain a soldier. If you think you can abolish war, abolish it; but do not suppose that when there are no wars to be waged, there will still be warriors to be worshipped. If it was a good thing that the monasteries were dissolved, let us say so and dismiss them. But the nobles who dissolved the monasteries did not shave their heads, and ask to be regarded as saints solely on account of that ceremony. The nobles did not dress up as abbots and ask to be credited with a potential talent for working miracles, because of the austerity of their vows of poverty and chastity. They got inside the houses, but not the hoods, and still less the haloes. They at least knew that it is not the habit that makes the monk. They were not so superstitious as those moderns, who think it is the veil that makes the bride.

What is respected, in short, is fidelity to the ancient flag of the family, and a readiness to fight for what I have noted as its unique type of freedom. I say readiness to fight, for fortunately the fight itself is the exception rather than the rule. The soldier is not respected

because he is doomed to death, but because he is ready for death; and even ready for defeat. The married man or woman is not doomed to evil, sickness or poverty; but is respected for taking a certain step for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness or in health. But there is one result of this line of argument which should correct a danger in some arguments on the same side.

It is very essential that a stricture on divorce, which is in fact simply a defence of marriage, should be independent of sentimentalism, especially in the form called optimism. A man justifying a fight for national independence or civic freedom is neither sentimental nor optimistic. He explains the sacrifice, but he does not explain it away. He does not say that bayonet wounds are pin-pricks, or mere scratches of the thorns on the rose of pleasure. He does not say that the whole display of firearms is a festive display of fireworks. On the contrary, when he praises it most, he praises it as pain rather than pleasure. He increases the praise with the pain; it is his whole boast that militarism, and even modern

science, can produce no instrument of torture to tame the soul of man. It is idle, in speaking of war, to pit the realistic against the romantic, in the sense of the heroic; for all possible realism can only increase the heroism; and therefore, in the highest sense, increase the romance. Now I do not compare marriage with war, but I do compare marriage with law or liberty or patriotism or popular government, or any of the human ideals which have often to be defended by war. Even the wildest of those ideals, which seem to escape from all the discipline of peace, do not escape from the discipline of war. The Bolshevists may have aimed at pure peace and liberty; but they have been compelled, for their own purpose, first to raise armies and then to rule armies. In a word, however beautiful you may think your own visions of beatitude, men must suffer to be beautiful, and even suffer a considerable interval of being ugly. And I have no notion of denying that mankind suffers much from the maintenance of the standard of marriage; as it suffers much from the necessity of criminal law or the recurrence of cru-

sades and revolutions. The only question here is whether marriage is indeed, as I maintain, an ideal and an institution making for popular freedom; I do not need to be told that anything making for popular freedom has to be paid for in vigilance and pain, and a whole army of martyrs.

Hence I am far indeed from denying the hard cases which exist here, as in all matters involving the idea of honour. For indeed I could not deny them without denying the whole parallel of militant morality on which my argument rests. But this being first understood, it will be well to discuss in a little more detail what are described as the tragedies of marriage. And the first thing to note about the most tragic of them is that they are not tragedies of marriage at all. They are tragedies of sex; and might easily occur in a highly modern romance in which marriage was not mentioned at all. It is generally summarised by saying that the tragic element is the absence of love. But it is often forgotten that another tragic element is often the presence of love. The doctors of divorce, with an air of

the frank and friendly realism of men of the world, are always recommending and rejoicing in a sensible separation by mutual consent. But if we are really to dismiss our dreams of dignity and honour, if we are really to fall back on the frank realism of our experience as men of the world, then the very first thing that our experience will tell us is that it very seldom is a separation by mutual consent; that is, that the consent very seldom is sincerely and spontaneously mutual. By far the commonest problem in such cases is that in which one party wishes to end the partnership and the other does not. And of that emotional situation you can make nothing but a tragedy, whichever way you turn it. With or without marriage, with or without divorce, with or without any arrangements that anybody can suggest or imagine, it remains a tragedy. The only difference is that by the doctrine of marriage it remains both a noble and a fruitful tragedy; like that of a man who falls fighting for his country, or dies testifying to the truth. But the truth is that the innovators have as much sham optimism about

divorce as any romanticist can have had about marriage. They regard their story, when it ends in the divorce court, through as rosy a mist of sentimentalism as anybody ever regarded a story ending with wedding bells. Such a reformer is quite sure that when once the prince and princess are divorced by the fairy godmother, they will live happily ever after. I enjoy romance, but I like it to be rooted in reality; and any one with a touch of reality knows that nine couples out of ten, when they are divorced, are left in an exceedingly different state. It will be safe to say in most cases that one partner will fail to find happiness in an infatuation, and the other will from the first accept a tragedy. In the realm of reality and not of romance, it is commonly a case of breaking hearts as well as breaking promises; and even dishonour is not always a remedy for remorse.

The next limitation to be laid down in the matter affects certain practical forms of discomfort, on a level rather lower than love or hatred. The cases most commonly quoted concern what is called "drink" and what is

called "cruelty." They are always talked about as matters of fact; though in practice they are very decidedly matters of opinion. It is not a flippancy, but a fact, that the misfortune of the woman who has married a drunkard may have to be balanced against the misfortune of the man who has married a teetotaler. For the very definition of drunkenness may depend on the dogma of teetotalism. Drunkenness, it has been very truly observed,* "may mean anything from *delirium tremens* to having a stronger head than the official appointed to conduct the examination." Mr. Bernard Shaw once professed, apparently seriously, that any man drinking wine or beer at all was incapacitated from managing a motor-car; and still more, therefore, one would suppose, from managing a wife. The scales are weighted here, of course, with all those false weights of snobbishness which are the curse of justice in this country. The working class is forced to conduct almost in public a normal and varying festive habit, which the upper class can afford to conduct in private; and a

*The late Cecil Chesterton, in the "New Witness."

certain section of the middle class, that which happens to concern itself most with local politics and social reforms, really has or affects a standard quite abnormal and even alien. They might go any lengths of injustice in dealing with the working man or working woman accused of too hearty a taste in beer. To mention but one matter out of a thousand, the middle class reformers are obviously quite ignorant of the hours at which working people begin to work. Because they themselves, at eleven o'clock in the morning, have only recently finished breakfast and the full moral digestion of the *Daily Mail,* they think a charwoman drinking beer at that hour is one of those arising early in the morning to follow after strong drink. Most of them really do not know that she has already done more than half a heavy day's work, and is partaking of a very reasonable luncheon. The whole problem of proletarian drink is entangled in a network of these misunderstandings; and there is no doubt whatever that, when judged by these generalisations, the poor will be taken in a net of injustices. And this truth is as certain in

the case of what is called cruelty as of what is called drink. Nine times out of ten the judgment on a navvy for hitting a woman is about as just as a judgment on him for not taking off his hat to a lady. It is a class test; it may be a class superiority; but it is not an act of equal justice between the classes. It leaves out a thousand things; the provocation, the atmosphere, the harassing restrictions of space, the nagging which Dickens described as the terrors of "temper in a cart," the absence of certain taboos of social training, the tradition of greater roughness even in the gestures of affection. To make all marriage or divorce, in the case of such a man, turn upon a blow is like blasting the whole life of a gentleman because he has slammed the door. Often a poor man cannot slam the door; partly because the model villa might fall down; but more because he has nowhere to go to; the smoking-room, the billiard-room and the peacock music-room not being yet attached to his premises.

I say this in passing, to point out that while I do not dream of suggesting that there are only happy marriages, there will quite cer-

tainly, as things work nowadays, be a very large number of unhappy and unjust divorces. They will be cases in which the innocent partner will receive the real punishment of the guilty partner, through being in fact and feeling the faithful partner. For instance, it is insisted that a married person must at least find release from the society of a lunatic; but it is also true that the scientific reformers, with their fuss about "the feeble-minded," are continually giving larger and looser definitions of lunacy. The process might begin by releasing somebody from a homicidal maniac, and end by dealing in the same way with a rather dull conversationalist. But in fact nobody does deny that a person should be allowed some sort of release from a homicidal maniac. The most extreme school of orthodoxy only maintains that anybody who has had that experience should be content with that release. In other words, it says he should be content with that experience of matrimony, and not seek another. It was put very wittily, I think, by a Roman Catholic friend of mine, who said

he approved of release so long as it was not spelt with a hyphen.

To put it roughly, we are prepared in some cases to listen to the man who complains of having a wife. But we are not prepared to listen, at such length, to the same man when he comes back and complains that he has not got a wife. Now in practice at this moment the great mass of the complaints are precisely of this kind. The reformers insist particularly on the pathos of a man's position when he has obtained a separation without a divorce. Their most tragic figure is that of the man who is already free of all those ills he had, and is only asking to be allowed to fly to others that he knows not of. I should be the last to deny that, in certain emotional circumstances, his tragedy may be very tragic indeed. But his tragedy is of the emotional kind which can never be entirely eliminated; and which he has himself, in all probability, inflicted on the partner he has left. We may call it the price of maintaining an ideal or the price of making a mistake; but anyhow it is the point of our whole distinction in the matter; it is here

that we draw the line, and I have nowhere denied that it is a line of battle. The battle joins on the debatable ground, not of the man's doubtful past but of his still more doubtful future. In a word, the divorce controversy is not really a controversy about divorce. It is a controversy about re-marriage; or rather about whether it is marriage at all.

And with that we can only return to the point of honour which I have compared here to a point of patriotism; since it is both the smallest and the greatest kind of patriotism. Men have died in torments during the last five years for points of patriotism far more dubious and fugitive. Men like the Poles or the Serbians, through long periods of their history, may be said rather to have lived in torments. I will never admit that the vital need of the freedom of the family, as I have tried to sketch it here, is not a cause as valuable as the freedom of any frontier. But I do willingly admit that the cause would be a dark and terrible one, if it really asked these men to suffer torments. As I have stated it, on its most extreme terms, it only asks them to suffer ab-

negations. And those negative sufferings I do think they may honourably be called upon to bear, for the glory of their own oath and the great things by which the nations live. In relation to their own nation most normal men will feel that this distinction between release and "re-lease" is neither fanciful nor harsh, but very rational and human. A patriot may be an exile in another country; but he will not be a patriot of another country. He will be as cheerful as he can in an abnormal position; he may or may not sing his country's songs in a strange land; but he will not sing the strange songs as his own. And such may fairly be also the attitude of the citizen who has gone into exile from the oldest of earthly cities.

THE VISTA OF DIVORCE

VIII.—The Vista of Divorce

THE case for divorce combines all the advantages of having it both ways; and of drawing the same deduction from right or left, and from black or white. Whichever way the programme works in practice, it can still be justified in theory. If there are few examples of divorce, it shows how little divorce need be dreaded; if there are many, it shows how much it is required. The rarity of divorce is an argument in favour of divorce; and the multiplicity of divorce is an argument against marriage. Now, in truth, if we were confined to considering this alternative in a speculative manner, if there were no concrete facts but only abstract probabilities, we should have no difficulty in arguing our case. The abstract liberty allowed by the reformers is as near as possible to anarchy, and gives no logical or

legal guarantee worth discussing. The advantages of their reform do not accrue to the innocent party, but to the guilty party; especially if he be sufficiently guilty. A man has only to commit the crime of desertion to obtain the reward of divorce. And if they are entitled to take as typical the most horrible hypothetical cases of the abuse of the marriage laws, surely we are entitled to take equally extreme possibilities in the abuse of their own divorce laws. If they, when looking about for a husband, so often hit upon a homicidal maniac, surely we may politely introduce them to the far more human figure of the gentleman who marries as many women as he likes and gets rid of them as often as he pleases. But in fact there is no necessity for us to argue thus in the abstract; for the amiable gentleman in question undoubtedly exists in the concrete. Of course, he is no new figure; he is a very recurrent type of rascal; his name has been Lothario or Don Juan; and he has often been represented as a rather romantic rascal. The point of divorce reform, it cannot be too often repeated, is that the rascal

should not only be regarded as romantic, but regarded as respectable. He is not to sow his wild oats and settle down; he is merely to settle down to sowing his wild oats. They are to be regarded as tame and inoffensive oats; almost, if one may say so, as Quaker oats. But there is no need, as I say, to speculate about whether the looser view of divorce might prevail; for it is already prevailing. The newspapers are full of an astonishing hilarity about the rapidity with which hundreds or thousands of human families are being broken up by the lawyers; and about the undisguised haste of the "hustling judges" who carry on the work. It is a form of hilarity which would seem to recall the gaiety of a grave-digger in a city swept by a pestilence. But a few details occasionally flash by in the happy dance; from time to time the court is moved by a momentary curiosity about the causes of the general violation of oaths and promises; as if there might, here and there, be a hint of some sort of reason for ruining the fundamental institution of society. And nobody who notes those details, or considers

those faint hints of reason, can doubt for a moment that masses of these men and women are now simply using divorce in the spirit of free-love. They are very seldom the sort of people who have once fallen tragically into the wrong place, and have now found their way triumphantly to the right place. They are almost always people who are obviously wandering from one place to another, and will probably leave their last shelter exactly as they have left their first. But it seems to amuse them to make again, if possible in a church, a promise they have already broken in practice and almost avowedly disbelieve in principle.

In face of this headlong fashion, it is really reasonable to ask the divorce reformers what is their attitude towards the old monogamous ethic of our civilisation; and whether they wish to retain it in general, or to retain it at all. Unfortunately even the sincerest and most lucid of them use language which leaves the matter a little doubtful. Mr. E. S. P. Haynes is one of the most brilliant and most fair-minded controversialists on that side; and

he has said, for instance, that he agrees with me in supporting the ideal of indissoluble or, at least, of undissolved marriage. Mr. Haynes is one of the few friends of divorce who are also real friends of democracy; and I am sure that in practice this stands for a real sympathy with the home, especially the poor home. Unfortunately, on the theoretic side, the word "ideal" is far from being an exact term, and is open to two almost opposite interpretations. For many would say that marriage is an ideal as some would say that monasticism is an ideal, in the sense of a council of perfection. Now certainly we might preserve a conjugal ideal in this way. A man might be reverently pointed out in the street as a sort of saint, merely because he was married. A man might wear a medal for monogamy; or have letters after his name similar to V.C. or D.D.; let us say L.W. for "Lives With His Wife," or "N.D.Y. for "Not Divorced Yet." We might, on entering some strange city, be struck by a stately column erected to the memory of a wife who never ran away with a soldier, or the shrine and image of a historical character,

who had resisted the example of the man in the "New Witness" ballade in bolting with the children's nurse. Such high artistic hagiology would be quite consistent with Mr. Haynes' divorce reform; with re-marriage after three years, or three hours. It would also be quite consistent with Mr. Haynes' phrase about preserving an ideal of marriage. What it would not be consistent with is the perfectly plain, solid, secular and social usefulness which I have here attributed to marriage. It does not create or preserve a natural institution, normal to the whole community, to balance the more artificial and even more arbitrary institution of the state; which is less natural even if it is equally necessary. It does not defend a voluntary association, but leaves the only claim on life, death and loyalty with a more coercive institution. It does not stand, in the sense I have tried to explain, for the principle of liberty. In short, it does not do any of the things which Mr. Haynes himself would especially desire to see done. For humanity to be thus spontaneously organised from below, it is necessary that the organisa-

tion should be almost as universal as the official organisation from above. The tyrant must find not one family but many families defying his power; he must find mankind not a dust of atoms, but fixed in solid blocks of fidelity. And those human groups must support not only themselves but each other. In this sense what some call individualism is as corporate as communism. It is a thing of volunteers; but volunteers must be soldiers. It is a defence of private persons; but we might say that the private persons must be private soldiers. The family must be recognised as well as real; above all, the family must be recognised by the families. To expect individuals to suffer successfully for a home apart from the home, that is for something which is an incident but not an institution, is really a confusion between two ideas; it is a verbal sophistry almost in the nature of a pun. Similarly, for instance, we cannot prove the moral force of a peasantry by pointing to one peasant; we might almost as well reveal the military force of infantry by pointing to one infant.

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I take it, however, that the advocates of divorce do not mean that marriage is to remain ideal only in the sense of being almost impossible. They do not mean that a faithful husband is only to be admired as a fanatic. The reasonable men among them do really mean that a divorced person shall be tolerated as something unusually unfortunate, not merely that a married person shall be admired as something unusually blessed and inspired. But whatever they desire, it is as well that they should realise exactly what they do; and in this case I should like to hear their criticisms in the matter of what they see. They must surely see that in England at present, as in many parts of America in the past, the new liberty is being taken in the spirit of licence as if the exception were to be the rule, or, rather, perhaps the absence of rule. This will especially be made manifest if we consider that the effect of the process is accumulative like a snowball, and returns on itself like a snowball. The obvious effect of frivolous divorce will be frivolous marriage. If people can be separated for no reason they will feel

it all the easier to be united for no reason. A man might quite clearly foresee that a sensual infatuation would be fleeting, and console himself with the knowledge that the connection could be equally fleeting. There seems no particular reason why he should not elaborately calculate that he could stand a particular lady's temper for ten months; or reckon that he would have enjoyed and exhausted her repertoire of drawing-room songs in two years. The old joke about choosing the wife to fit the furniture or the fashions might quite logically return, not as an old joke but as a new solemnity; indeed, it will be found that a new religion is generally the return of an old joke. A man might quite consistently see a woman as suited to the period of the hobble skirt, and as less suited to the threatened recurrence of the crinoline. These fancies are fantastic enough, but they are not a shade more fantastic than the facts of many a divorce controversy as urged in the divorce courts. And this is to leave out altogether the most fantastic fact of all: the winking at widespread and conspicuous collusion. Collusion has become

not so much an illegal evasion as a legal fiction, and even a legal institution, as it is admirably satirised in Mr. Somerset Maugham's brilliant play of "Home and Beauty." The fact was very frankly brought before the public, by a man who was eminently calculated to disarm satire by sincerity. Colonel Wedgewood is a man who can never be too much honoured, by all who have any hope of popular liberties still finding champions in the midst of parliamentary corruption. He is one of the very few men alive who have shown both military and political courage; the courage of the camp and the courage of the forum. And doubtless he showed a third type of social courage, in avowing the absurd expedient which so many others are content merely to accept and employ. It is admittedly a frantic and farcical thing that a good man should find or think it necessary to pretend to commit a sin. Some of the divorce moralists seem to deduce from this that he ought really to commit the sin. They may possibly be aware, however, that there are some who do not agree with them.

For this latter fact is the next step in the speculative progress of the new morality. The divorce advocates must be well aware that modern civilisation still contains strong elements, not the least intelligent and certainly not the least vigorous, which will not accept the new respectability as a substitute for the old religious vow. The Roman Catholic Church, the Anglo-Catholic school, the conservative peasantries, and a large section of the popular life everywhere, will regard the riot of divorce and re-marriage as they would any other riot of irresponsibility. The consequence would appear to be that two different standards will appear in ordinary morality, and even in ordinary society. Instead of the old social distinction between those who are married and those who are unmarried, there will be a distinction between those who are married and those who are really married. Society might even become divided into two societies; which is perilously approximate to Disraeli's famous exaggeration about England divided into two nations. But whether England be actually so divided or not, this note of

the two nations is the real note of warning in the matter. It is in this connection, perhaps, that we have to consider most gravely and doubtfully the future of our own country.

Anarchy cannot last, but anarchic communities cannot last either. Mere lawlessness cannot live, but it can destroy life. The nations of the earth always return to sanity and solidarity; but the nations which return to it first are the nations which survive. We in England cannot afford to allow our social institutions to go to pieces, as if this ancient and noble country were an ephemeral colony. We cannot afford it comparatively, even if we could afford it positively. We are surrounded by vigorous nations mainly rooted in the peasant or permanent ideals; notably in the case of France and Ireland. I know that the detested and detestably undemocratic parliamentary clique, which corrupts France as it does England, was persuaded or bribed by a Jew named Naquet to pass a crude and recent divorce law, which was full of the hatred of Christianity. But only a very superficial critic of France can be unaware that French

parliamentarism is superficial. The French nation as a whole, the most rigidly respectable nation in the world, will certainly go on living by the old standards of domesticity. When Frenchmen are not Christians they are heathens; the heathens who worshipped the household gods. It might seem strange to say, for instance, that an atheist like M. Clemenceau has for his chief ideal a thing called piety. But to understand this it is only necessary to know a little Latin—and a little French.

A short time ago, as I am well aware, it would have sounded very strange to represent the old religious and peasant communities either as a model or a menace. It was counted a queer thing to say, in the days when my friends and I first said it; in the days of my youth when the republic of France and the religion of Ireland were regarded as alike ridiculous and decadent. But many things have happened since then; and it will not now be so easy to persuade even newspaper readers that Foch is a fool, either because he is a Frenchman or because he is a Catholic. The older tradition, even in the most unfashion-

able forms, has found champions in the most unexpected quarters. Only the other day Dr. Saleeby, a distinguished scientific critic who had made himself the special advocate of all the instruction and organisation that is called social science, startled his friends and foes alike by saying that the peasant families in the West of Ireland were far more satisfactory and succeessful than those brooded over by all the benevolent sociology of Bradford. He gave his testimony from an entirely rationalistic and even materialistic point of view; indeed, he carried rationalism so far as to give the preference to Roscommon because the women are still mammals. To a mind of the more traditional type it might seem sufficient to say they are still mothers. To a memory that lingers over the legends and lyrical movements of mankind, it might seem no great improvement to imagine a song that ran "My mammal bids me bind my hair," or "I'm to be Queen of the May, mammal, I'm to be Queen of the May." But indeed the truth to which he testified is all the more arresting, because for him it was materialistic and not mystical.

The brute biological advantage, as well as other advantages, was with those for whom that truth was a truth; and it was all the more instinctive and automatic where that truth was a tradition. The sort of place where mothers are still something more than mammals is the only sort of place where they still are mammals. There the people are still healthy animals; healthy enough to hit you if you call them animals. I also have, on this merely controversial occasion, used throughout the rationalistic and not the religious appeal. But it is not unreasonable to note that the materialistic advantages are really found among those who most repudiate materialism. This one stray testimony is but a type of a thousand things of the same kind, which will convince any one with the sense of social atmospheres that the day of the peasantries is not passing, but rather arriving. It is the more complex types of society that are now entangled in their own complexities. Those who tell us, with a monotonous metaphor, that we cannot put the clock back, seem to be curiously unconscious of the fact that their own clock has

stopped. And there is nothing so hopeless as clockwork when it stops. A machine cannot mend itself; it requires a man to mend it; and the future lies with those who can make living laws for men and not merely dead laws for machinery. Those living laws are not to be found in the scatter-brained scepticism which is busy in the great cities, dissolving what it cannot analyse. The primary laws of man are to be found in the permanent life of man; in those things that have been common to it in every time and land, though in the highest civilisation they have reached an enrichment like that of the divine romance of Cana in Galilee. We know that many critics of such a story say that its elements are not permanent; but indeed it is the critics who are not permanent. A hundred mad dogs of heresy have worried man from the beginning; but it was always the dog that died. We know there is a school of prigs who disapprove of the wine; and there may now be a school of prigs who disapprove of the wedding. For in such a case as the story of Cana, it may be remarked that the pedants are preju-

diced against the earthly elements as much as, or more than, the heavenly elements. It is not the supernatural that disgusts them, so much as the natural. And those of us who have seen all the normal rules and relations of humanity uprooted by random speculators, as if they were abnormal abuses and almost accidents, will understand why men have sought for something divine if they wished to preserve anything human. They will know why common sense, cast out from some academy of fads and fashions conducted on the lines of a luxurious madhouse, has age after age sought refuge in the high sanity of a sacrament.

CONCLUSION

IX.—Conclusion

THIS is a pamphlet and not a book; and the writer of a pamphlet not only deals with passing things, but generally with things which he hopes will pass. In that sense it is the object of a pamphlet to be out of date as soon as possible. It can only survive when it does not succeed. The successful pamphlets are necessarily dull; and though I have no great hopes of this being successful, I dare say it is dull enough for all that. It is designed merely to note certain fugitive proposals of the moment, and compare them with certain recurrent necessities of the race; but especially the necessity for some spontaneous social formation freer than that of the state. If it were more in the nature of a work of literature, with anything like an ambition of endurance, I might go deeper into the matter, and give

some suggestions about the philosophy or religion of marriage, and the philosophy or religion of all these rather random departures from it. Some day perhaps I may try to write something about the spiritual or psychological quarrel between faith and fads. Here I will only say, in conclusion, that I believe the universal fallacy here is a fallacy of being universal. There is a sense in which it is really a human if heroic possibility to love everybody; and the young student will not find it a bad preliminary exercise to love somebody. But the fallacy I mean is that of a man who is not even content to love everybody, but really wishes to be everybody. He wishes to walk down a hundred roads at once; to sleep in a hundred houses at once; to live a hundred lives at once. To do something like this in the imagination is one of the occasional visions of art and poetry; to attempt it in the art of life is not only anarchy but inaction. Even in the arts it can only be the first hint and not the final fulfillment; a man cannot work at once in bronze and marble, or play the organ and the violin at the same time.

The universal vision of being such a Briareus is a nightmare of nonsense even in the merely imaginative world; and ends in mere nihilism in the social world. If a man had a hundred houses, there would still be more houses than he had days in which to dream of them; if a man had a hundred wives, there would still be more women than he could ever know. He would be an insane sultan jealous of the whole human race, and even of the dead and the unborn. I believe that behind the art and philosophy of our time there is a considerable element of this bottomless ambition and this unnatural hunger; and since in these last words I am touching only lightly on things that would need much larger treatment, I will admit that the rending of the ancient roof of man is probably only a part of such an endless and empty expansion. I asked in the last chapter what those most wildly engaged in the mere dance of divorce, as fantastic as the dance of death, really expected for themselves or for their children. And in the deepest sense I think this is the answer; that they expect the impossible, that is the universal. They

are not crying for the moon, which is a definite and therefore a defensible desire. They are crying for the world; and when they had it, they would want another one. In the last resort they would like to try every situation, not in fancy but in fact; but they cannot refuse any and therefore cannot resolve on any. In so far as this is the modern mood, it is a thing so deadly as to be already dead. What is vitally needed everywhere, in art as much as in ethics, in poetry as much as in politics, is choice; a creative power in the will as well as in the mind. Without that self-limitation of somebody, nothing living will ever see the light.

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